

Keys to the Qur'an

Volume 4

Commentary on Surahs Ankabut,
Al-Rahman, Al-Waq'iah and Al-Mulk

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CHAPTER 55

Surat Al-Rahmān (The Beneficent)

This *sūrah* (chapter) takes its title from one of the Divine Attributes of Allah: *al-Rahmān*, 'The Beneficent'.

The chapter is attributed to the early Meccan period. There is a tradition in which the Prophet says, 'For everything there is a bride, and the bride of the Qur'an is the *sūrah* of the Beneficent.' It is the only chapter which begins with a divine name. It contains aspects of creation in contrasting pairs: visible man and invisible *jinn*, heaven and earth, land and sea, happiness and wretchedness. All are signs and effects emanating from the one Cause.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

الرَّحْمَنُ ۝۱

1. The Beneficent,

عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ ۝۲

2. Taught the Qur'an.

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ ٢

3. He created man.

عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ ٤

4. Taught him speech.

Al – Rahmān, the Beneficent, is one of the key Attributes of Allah. The Attributes are also known as the Beautiful Names of Allah. Every Attribute is a sign (*āyah*) indicating the oneness of Allah. Everything in creation is connected to Him.

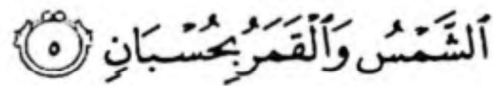
So that man may understand, appreciate and experience the mercy (*rahmah*) of the Beneficent, knowledge has been bestowed upon him. One cannot, however, understand something unless and until it is experienced. Therefore, the most valuable knowledge in life's journey, the knowledge of the Qur'an, cannot be understood unless it is learned and experienced. Man's link to God is through the Qur'an and through the knowledge that enables him to see the all-encompassing mercy of the Creator.

The Creator contains the knowledge of what He will create. His creation is based on that knowledge. The highest creation is the Muhammadan light, the perfect being. The knowledge of this final creation, the ultimate being, the vicegerent (*khalīfah*) of God on earth, was with the one-and-only Knower (*al-'Alīm*) from the beginning. Thus, the light of Muhammad was there when Adam was still between water and clay. The ultimate purpose of creation was the Perfect Man, whose blueprint lies potentially within all humankind.

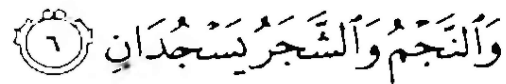
Every aspect of the creation has the label of the Creator on it. By His decree His mercy is manifested and distributed. The Qur'an is the manifested mercy of knowledge. When the mercy of Allah materializes through the creational act, it produces wider and wider ripples which are 'the clear evidence' (*bayān*).

What is most subtle appears in gross, physical manifestations towards which man focuses his perception. Everything that is seen bears witness to its subjugation to the decree of the Beneficent.

The knowledge of the Qur'an is the knowledge of unity (*tawhīd*). Access to knowledge of Allah is through the understanding of His decree. Creation took place according to the decree, and the clear evidence is the manifestation of that creation. Man seeks evidence for everything. He is always seeking knowledge. He seeks to know the cause, effect and proof of things. Nothing is haphazard, everything leaves its trace. Man is the trace of the Creator. He is His evidence. Everything in His existence is a sign of Him (*āyat Allāh*). If man knows himself, he has known the meaning of lordship (*rubūbiyyah*), for tradition relates: 'He who knows himself has known his Lord.'



5. The sun and the moon follow a reckoned course.

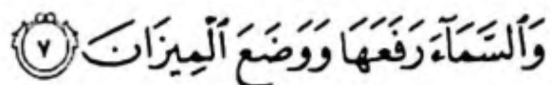


6. And the herbs and the trees prostrate in adoration.

Life cannot exist without the sun. When the sun begins to disappear, life will cease in its different forms, and will end totally. The sun is self-effulgent while the moon is a faithful reflector; it, too, has its influence over life. Reality's reflector is the prophetic being. Both the sun and the moon have a beginning and an end: They 'follow a reckoned course'. Likewise, the cosmic journey had its start and will have its end. This is the condition of any journey in this universe.

'And the herbs and the trees prostrate in adoration': *najm* means herbs or grass and also a star. All of creation adores, prostrates, and is under the control of the one Reality. It makes

no difference whether they be celestial or terrestrial entities, all are under the guardianship (*haymanah*) of Allah. Their very existence glorifies their Creator.



7. And the heaven, He raised it high, and He set up the balance.

The heavens are uplifted, the cosmos is expanded, and the balance of its destiny has been set. The entire creation is based on the balancing forces of the cosmos that hold it together in dynamic flux. Everything is in balance, balance based on gross and subtle interrelationships and harmonies, ever-changing patterns based on unity.

Transgression is against oneself and everyone else. When someone unjustly destroys another human being, he symbolically destroys the entire creation, which includes himself. Every human being contains the meaning of the cosmos. To re-establish the balance the killer himself must be destroyed. The killer's punishment is the same as his crime. Because he has destroyed himself inwardly, so he must also be destroyed in the outer form.

If human love is lost, one is better off ending the friendship. If there is no love or respect between people, the inner reality will emerge in the outer relationship. One cannot affect one side of a balance without the other side being affected. It may be so subtle that one does not recognize the difference, but nothing goes unheard by Reality. As far as the balancing act in creation is concerned, small is as significant as large. Reflect on the size of the atom bomb compared to the destruction that it causes. What is the size of love? Man is not the judge or the balancer; Allah is; all is measured in His judgment.

Man expects equity, which means that, potentially, everyone has the same base. He does not accept someone being placed higher than himself without just reason. Equity is expected,

but to expect equality is thoughtless, for men excel through their efforts or natural gifts. If one person spends life purifying his heart through good deeds, while another does not, will the two reap the same result? By using one's faculty of reason one can understand that equality does not exist. Every finger of the hand is different, yet there is equity among them in that they each perform vital and unique functions. If someone builds a house while another spends his time bird-watching, in the end one will have a house and the other will be an expert ornithologist. Having a house is not equal to being able to distinguish bird calls, they are different. One can reasonably recognize this inequality. There is no equality here, but there can be equity and justice.

Spiritually, everyone has the same possibility of recognizing higher Reality, of knowing Allah. Man's outer potential is restricted within the bounds of certain circumstances. For example, a person may have to live with a handicap as a result of an accident or birth defect. Within these bounds, however, there is no restriction in the degree to which one may abandon oneself in trust, the degree to which one may believe, the degree to which one may live in a state of dynamic submission and inspiration. During life's journey one's intentions may be increasingly purified. If this were not the case, where would the mercy of Allah be? If there is a predestined, inescapable decree of fact, there would be no mercy. The highest gift relates to spiritual progress and freedom of man through abandonment and submission: Islam.

In this life people are on different levels of spiritual and material planes. This is the outcome of the interaction of man's will with the creational laws and realities, some of which he may never overcome. Someone who suffers a severe defect, for example, may never be rehabilitated. It is a limitation. However, it is in the spiritual dimension that we are potentially limitless.

Through knowledge of the Book of creation, through the

Qur'an, the Beneficent has bestowed upon man the possibility of rising towards Allah to the ultimate degree. This goal is reached through avoiding other-than-Allah. This is the freedom man has; otherwise he is limited. Everyone has limitations, but where man is not limited is in the degree to which he can depend on Allah, yield himself up to Allah, have no thought except of Allah and no expectation other than Allah. To unify one's destiny with Allah's will, that is freedom.

Man will sometimes accept situations that do not allow for the possibility of fearful awareness (*taqwā*), of being a true representative (*khalifah*) of Allah, which is the mark of his humanity. He, therefore, has to strive. The path is clear: it is the path of Islam based on the knowledge of the Qur'an which is the manifestation of Allah's mercy.

أَلَّا تَطْغَوْا فِي الْمِيزَانِ ۝٨

8. That you not exceed the measure.

وَأَقِيمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيزَانَ ۝٩

9. And keep up the balance with equity and do not make the measure deficient.

The word for 'exceed' is the verb *taghā* which means 'to go beyond the bounds'. *Tāghiya* means a despot or tyrant. There are many subtler forms of transgression more difficult to discern and which one must shed so that one does not cut across the laws of reality. Allah's way is the perfect balance (*mizān*) free of transgression.

Should man lose the balance, he has lost himself, because he has allowed the lower self to act according to its orientation of imbalance and denial. This denial is of the Beneficent and source of creation.

If man makes sure not to upset what is already in balance, he is unlikely to do himself harm, and is closer to being a

living Qur'an. Allah is telling man to give value to a life of harmony. Man should be concerned, conscientious, aware, and in remembrance (*dhikr*). Does he know what he is doing and what his intention is for doing so? Are his intentions and actions unified?

The Prophet said, 'Anger corrupts trust and faith (*īmān*) as vinegar corrupts honey.' We construct things, and then corrupt them because we do not give priority and importance to what matters. What weight does man give to the meaning of 'And do not make the measure deficient'? We must not forget that we are on a journey, a path from the womb to the tomb. Balance is about recognizing that one is the interspace between two worlds. We are in this world but not of this world. Man has come only to leave.

وَالْأَرْضَ وَضَعَهَا لِلْأَنَامِ ﴿١٠﴾

10. And He has placed living creatures on the earth.

فِيهَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَالنَّخْلُ ذَاتُ الْأَكْمَامِ ﴿١١﴾

11. Therein are fruit and palms with sheathed clusters.

Allah set up the earth in order that man, who is in continuous flux and disturbance, should come to recognize his origin, to recognize his innate nature (*fiḥrah*), to recognize how he has come into being from non-being. As part of His mercy, man has been dropped into the garden (*jannah*) in the same way as his forefathers were. When Adam came out of the crack of non-time, Allah told him that this garden had been given to him so that he could have a place of stability (*maqarr*), a place to settle for a while.

The earth (*al-ard*) is necessary for man's progress. It is a foundation or ground floor which provides man, who is in continuous turmoil biologically, physiologically, mentally and spiritually, with the possibility of remembering the beyond-

time. Allah says, 'Am I not your Lord?' By forgetting everything else, the innate (*fitri*) remembrance that there is only Allah, will come to be recognized. On the earth man is able to recognize that all the creatures, plants and other living things fulfill innate natures and have also come from the one Creator.

The physical description of the Garden is a metaphor and it is the state which the Garden brings about that is important, not the physical Garden itself or the detailed description thereof. Creation manifests in clusters: from the one branch come the many, and Allah's mercy is abundantly displayed in every form.

We have been brought to this earth to be groomed as part of our spiritual upbringing (*tarbiyyah*). We recognize what is transient and what is not, what is permanent and what is not, what is meaningful and what is not. Whatever changes is part of human experience. The reason man does not see the sole hand of Allah behind everything is because the self (*nafs*) interferes and continually projects experiences. If he were to put himself aside, there would be the experience of the One-and-Only Reality.

The original 'fall' from the state of the Garden came about with the rise of consciousness and the process of reasoning and questioning. If man desires to be in the Garden, he should submit and give up all questions. As a result, he will receive answers to all the real questions. When one enters the inner garden of one's heart in this life, one has tasted the Garden of the next. Then even the desire for the Garden falls from one's heart. What is left is witnessing the face of Allah in every direction towards which one turns.

Life is characterized by motion and can only be experienced in time. Time stops when life stops. When that happens there is no opportunity left to change past good and bad actions. People who have come close to death through an accident, see the film of their life replayed before them instantaneously. Life is transient, in perpetual change and therefore unstable. How

can one take man's changing moods and desires seriously? What one desires now has nothing to do with what was desired a few years ago; yet we have the audacity to claim to be the same person as fifteen years ago.

On the other hand, how can anyone say that he has changed if he has failed to recognize and experience the core within him that never changes? How can man get up in the morning and say that he has slept well or badly unless there is something within him that never sleeps? 'Slumber does not overtake Him nor does sleep' (2:225). How can man say that he has been angry unless there is something within him that is always steadfast and considerate? What man wants most earnestly is what is constant, reliable and enduring, the Ever-Continuing root (*al-Bāqī*). Everyone is on the path to know Allah whether he recognizes it or not.

If man is to qualify for knowledge of Allah, it must be by his knowledge of the Beneficent, and that is attained by upholding the balance, the Qur'an. Man's qualification for being admitted to the mercy of the Qur'an's knowledge is dependent upon leaving himself behind when he enters this knowledge, because the Qur'an is the treasury of Allah where His laws and knowledge are kept. One can only come to Allah with fearful awareness and abandonment, waiting to witness mercy, trusting that there is only mercy of Allah, praying that one will see it manifest in the form of knowledge which can then be transferred into behavior.

Everything goes back to Allah. Every ounce of knowledge takes man back to its point of emanation, its root and source.

وَالْحَبُّ ذُو الْعَصْفِ وَالرَّيْحَانُ ۝۱۲

12. And the grain with its husk and fragrance.

فَيَايَءَ الْآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿١٣﴾

13. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

Big things come from little things. *Habb* or grain, is literally a seed that comes from grass. There are many different types of vegetation, and their meanings are linked to the nourishment which they provide. The living, sentient creatures and the vegetable kingdom are interdependent. The highest creature, the human being, depends on those that are lower because physically he is formed from the lowest: dust. Yet he loves what is high because he originates from the Most High. There is the drive of essence in him that always makes him love subtler meanings.

The Prophet said he loved prayer, perfume and women. Once one's physical needs are fulfilled, one seeks higher satisfaction in meanings. If a man is fortunate, he experiences physical and material fulfillment as well as inner equilibrium and contentment. Most people only achieve short-term physical or material pleasures devoid of any deep meaning or significance.

Wherever man looks there is a sign of the Beneficent, even in what one considers to be an affliction. All events occur according to the laws that govern existence which are from the Lord, Allah. We may not like an event, but that is because of our expectations. But what we want may not happen, and what is destiny will certainly happen. If what one wants is what Allah wants, there exists perfect harmony between the decree and personal destiny. If there is disharmony, all one can do is turn to Allah in repentance for having acted in incongruity to His laws.

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ كَالْفَخَّارِ ﴿١٤﴾

14. He created man from dry clay like earthen vessels.

وَخَلَقَ الْجَانَّ مِنْ مَّارِجٍ مِنْ نَّارٍ ﴿١٥﴾

15. And He created the jinn from the smokeless fire.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿١٦﴾

16. Which then of the bounties of your Lord
will you deny?

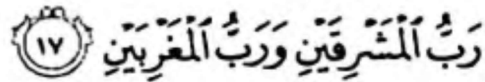
Man is materially created from the constituents of earth. His physical nourishment is like that of a plant. But his overall needs include nourishment of a most subtle variety. The subtlest of nourishments is that of the heart; this is achieved by turning it away and weaning it from desires and attachments.

Everything in existence has its mirror image or opposite. For man there is the *jinn*, or unseen beings. The human being is the visible creature in creation. The Arabic word for mankind is *insān*, a word related to *uns* which means intimacy, solace, companionship. *Nasiya* is also related and means to forget. *Nisā'*, women, comes from this root. Man forgets Allah when he allows himself to become infatuated with women. *Nisā'* is related to *uns* because women do bring solace and intimacy, as well, but when that solace becomes obsession and dependence, as with anything that is carried to its extreme, the result is forgetfulness of the higher.

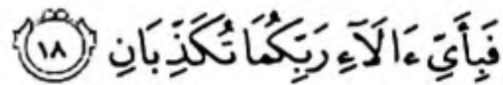
Jinn are entities which do not manifest in a physically solid form. They are created from an ether-like substance described as smokeless fire. *Jinn* have their bounds in a physical but unseen dimension as man has his bounds within the seen. The subtle source of both the world of *jinn* and of man is light or *nūr*. 'Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth'. (24:35).

Whatever one looks at is a sign of the immeasurable glory and majesty of the Creator. How can man deny any of these bounties? Every sign is a bounty and a provision. What one seeks is the confidence of knowing that the Beneficent is behind each reflection of creation. Wherever one turns, there is the generosity and blessing of Allah.

But one takes this for granted and does not recognize that all is from Allah. One forgets and becomes distracted because one sees only what is in front of oneself in a habitual way. It is said that if a Muslim reads this chapter every day after dawn, he will never be troubled or afflicted, for he will see only the mercy of the Beneficent at all times. The reader becomes what is read, if he truly reads with deep recognition.



17. Lord of the two risings (east) and Lord of the two settings (west).



18. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

One of the meanings of the former verse was given by 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib who said, 'The east or sunrise (*shurūq*) of winter is different from that of summer, and the west or sunset (*ghurūb*) of summer is different from that of winter.' Indeed every day's sunrise and sunset is different. Winter and summer encompass dual and opposite experiences and meanings. In winter everything is dormant, while in summer life is in full bloom. The sun and life of winter is different from the sun and life of summer.

There is also a double rising of consciousness for this life and for the next. The people of inner knowledge often refer to the two risings as the risings of knowledge in the heart and

intellect ('*aqḥ*), and the two settings as the settings of the ego and self.

مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيَانِ ﴿١٩﴾

19. He has made the two seas to flow freely and they meet,

يَتَنَاهَا بَرْزَخٌ لَا يَبْغِيَانِ ﴿٢٠﴾

20. Though between is a barrier which they cannot pass.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٢١﴾

21. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

On the earth the two seas are the sweet water that comes from the mountains and rivers, and the salty water of the oceans and seas. The two do not mix, but they do meet.

Also, the seas may be likened to the two states of wakefulness and sleep or the two seas of the outer Law (*Shari'ah*) and inner reality (*haqiqah*), or the two seas of the sensory and meaning. Both the physical and non-physical parts of man's life have their bounds and laws; they interface but do not impinge on each other. The way of *haqiqah* (inner reality) hinges on the loyalty of abandonment, which takes one to the station of the truth of certainty (*haqq al-yaqīn*). The way of *Shari'ah* (outer revealed Law), on the other hand, holds one to the five pillars of Islam, so necessary because one's journey is in the tempestuous sea of sensory experience.

How can one deny the bounties of either the inner or outer sea? They will meet as they have met before. At the point of creation they were one and at the point of death they will merge once again. For the duration of this life there is

an invisible barrier, an interspace, between an apparent duality that does not allow the seas to connect.

In the same way the sun and the moon follow a reckoning. They came from one source and then were catapulted into space as two. Moving according to a certain, complex pattern, they will eventually come together again. There is an interspace between them that holds them apart as a man's body appears to be separate from his spirit (*rūh*).

There is the *qalb*, heart, from the root (*qalaba*) meaning to turn, and there is the spirit (*rūh*) which is disconnected from the world yet connected to the essence. Unlike the spirit, the heart may be seized by the world when it falls for desires and is tarnished by the world's 'salty sea'. The self is then darkened and the spirit can no longer provide the real nourishment and inner comfort needed. When the heart is purified, the self becomes transparent to the eternal spirit and is no longer destroyed by the storms of the journey in the world.

Everywhere one looks there are the two seas separated by a subtle barrier. The seas of knowledge and ignorance do not mingle. Life and death do not mix. Nothing transgresses the bounds because of the balance (*mīzān*). Creation is part of a perfect cosmos, not chaos.

يَخْرُجُ مِنْهُمَا اللُّؤْلُؤُ وَالْمَرْجَانُ ﴿٢٢﴾

22. From them come forth pearls and coral.

فَيَايَا آءِ الْآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٢٣﴾

23. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

From the seas come the pearl and the coral. The Arabic word for jewel is *jawhar* which also means intrinsic nature or essence. If one wants the essence of these seas, one must obtain their jewels, but diving for them is hazardous, perilous and uncertain.

The risk of sustaining bruises and cuts from the coral reef is one of the numerous dangers.

The formation of the pearl (*lu'lu'*), is an act of protection. The material of the pearl is the secretion the oyster uses to isolate the grain of sand that has entered its body. It is the material used to disconnect and isolate it. Coral (*marjān*), is formed by the reverse process. It is the substance that enables the animals to have a structured shelter and a firm foundation for dwelling. Thus pearls are formed by the power of repulsion and coral by the power of attraction. Every human action is motivated by either attraction or repulsion. Every thought process also relates to either repulsion or attraction. Whatever we experience is either something we desire and which attracts, or which repels; it is either pearl or coral.

All creational opposites grow, however, from the same root. These are two distinct entities that emanate from the same origin to which they will ultimately return.

وَلَهُ الْجَوَارِ الْمُنشَآتُ فِي الْبَحْرِ كَالْأَعْلَامِ ﴿٢٤﴾

24. His are the ships that loom upon the sea like banners.

فَيَايَ الْآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٢٥﴾

25. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

The word for banner (*'alam*) sounds similar to the word which means knowledge (*'ilm*). It is the sails that give the first evidence of an approaching vessel. Appearing and disappearing masts were one of the proofs centuries ago that the earth was, in fact, round and not flat, as had been believed.

Reflect upon how certain situations when looked at differently are the opposite of what one had originally thought. All that one sees, all of these projections of Reality, all these

flickers of knowledge or experience will ultimately disappear because all is within the bounds of space-time.

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ ﴿٢٦﴾

26. Everything on it must pass away.

وَبَقِيَ وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ ﴿٢٧﴾

27. And the face of your Lord possessed of majesty and glory alone will remain.

فَيَايَ الْآءِ رَبِّكَ مَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٢٨﴾

28. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

Whatever is on this earth, whatever is physical and appears solid or to have a separate identity, has its root and origin by command of Allah: 'There is no god but Allah' (*lā ilāha illa Allāh*). Everything announces its perishability. What remains is the fount of creation, the face of the majestic Lord. Face (*wajh*) also means sign, manifestation or direction. In his formal worship, the Muslim must face towards the formal, ancient 'House of God' that was built through the inspiration of Abraham in Mecca.

All of creation must honor its covenant, must honor 'the Lord of majesty and glory'. Man is an honorable creature if he would realize it, if only he would unify his physical material and emotional reality with his boundless inner reality. Man honors his biological contract by perishing. Everyone honors this physical destiny. How many of us honor our spiritual contract?

In the facade of creation one can recognize the constant manifestation of Allah's act. In the case of humans, actions are a result of the interplay of one's self and one's heart, for the faculty of witnessing and cognition is the heart. The less involved the lower self is, the freer the heart. When one's lower

self has been eliminated or burnt away, then one's heart is active and pulsating and fed by the spring of inspirations from the spirit. Such a heart reflects the truth reliably.

Those who are not in submission refuse to accept the reality of their destiny. When one is a child, one thinks adults are ancient. One cannot communicate with one's elders. But when one attains adulthood, one thinks one is still quite young. This change in relative perception is because there is within us an echo of eternity. But there is also in us the possibility of rejection and rebellion against reality. One refuses to admit that the self does not live forever and fails to remember physical death.

The seeker is advised by the Prophet that the most potent medicine for ailments of the soul is remembrance of death. This remedy is not to paralyze man or make him inactive and despondent but to make him efficient and clear in his actions, for it gives him a sense of urgency. When one constantly remembers death, one's actions are more real and less tarnished by personal greed, arrogance, vanity, revenge, and other attributes characteristic of the lower self.

Man wants to be in an environment that will help him in obtaining a deeper knowledge of reality, of which there is no end. The more one becomes aware of the immensity of Allah's Attributes, the greater the desire to know more of Allah. One should not assume that once somebody has had a glimpse of Allah's reality, that is the conclusion of the affair. There is no beginning or end to absolute Reality. The gnostic (*'arif bi'llāh*) is one who has had a window opened, with a reliable view of reality. The more he is able to look out from that window the more he will see the wider horizons and vistas.

يَسْتَلِهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ هُوَ فِي شَأْنٍ ﴿٢٩﴾

29. All those who are in the heavens and the earth beseech Him. Every day He is upon an affair.

فَيَايَآلَاءَ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٣٠﴾

30. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

Allah is the source of creation. Lordship sustains its emanation. The lord of a house must attend to every aspect of the house, every affair (*sha'n*). The lord of a house looks after its maintenance as well as all aspects of its inhabitants, in the same way as the Lord of lords looks after His entire creation. In every instant, every affair returns to Him. Lordship is attending to every affair, for it is based on unitive creation. Unity is the core whence all networks of existences emanate, superimposed on each other and interconnected.

سَنَفْرُغُ لَكُمْ أَيُّهَ الثَّقَلَانِ ﴿٣١﴾

31. Soon We shall be done with you, O you who deem yourselves weighty.

فَيَايَآلَاءَ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٣٢﴾

32. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

Every *jinn* and man, whether believer (*mu'min*) or denier (*kāfir*), having attained knowledge or remained in ignorance, will come to know the Day of Reckoning. Everyone knows deep inside himself that whatever affair he is engaged in will come to an end. If it does not come to an end in this world while he is still alive, it will come to an end with death. Man is completely and totally cornered. He has no way to escape from the temporary prison of space-time, which is his physical body, nor any way to escape the experience of death. If he submits to his situation, he is enlivened by Absolute Reality: Allah. If one dies to time, one will not experience its movement anymore; it will be as if

time has disappeared.

يَمْعَثَرُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ أَنْ تَنْفُذُوا مِنْ أَقْطَارِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ فَانْفُذُوا لَا
تَنْفُذُونَ إِلَّا بِسُلْطَانٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

33. O assembly of Jinn and men! If you are able to surpass the regions of the heavens and the earth, then pass. You cannot pass, however, except with authority.

فَيَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسُ رَبِّكُمْ تُكَذِّبُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

34. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

Allah encourages us to explore and reflect upon creation, but warns that there is courtesy to be observed. It is a positive challenge to man. Every sphere or zone has its bound and limitation. For a man to go beyond a zone he must be able to pierce or overcome its limit. To escape the gravitational pull of earth a rocket needs to exceed the speed of 17,000 miles per hour. This is the courtesy due to overcome gravity. All of the powers are derived from the one-and-only All-Encompassing Divine Power.

يُرْسَلُ عَلَيْكُمَا شَوْابٌ مِّنْ نَّارٍ وَنُحَاسٌ فَلَا تَنْصِرَانِ ﴿٢٤﴾

35. The flames of fire and misfortune will be sent upon the two of you and then you will not be able to defend yourselves.

فَيَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسُ رَبِّكُمْ تُكَذِّبُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

36. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

Within the boundaries of the heavens and earth a point is reached where the possibility of penetration ceases. There is

a limit to every system and every creational situation. *Jinn* and man can penetrate into the heavens, as man has done in the past few decades.

فَإِذَا انشَقَّتِ السَّمَاءُ فَكَانَتْ وَرْدَةً كَالدِّهَانِ ﴿٣٧﴾

37. So when the heaven is rent asunder and becomes red like hide.

فَيَايَا آلَاءَ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٣٨﴾

38. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

When the heavens eventually break apart, when creation fragments, another state will prevail in the cosmos. At present, the heat of our solar system is in a state of equilibrium. An example of disequilibrium is found in the form of sunspots. Whenever they occur on the sun there are disturbances on the earth, though none great enough to throw it out of balance. The system of counterbalanced forces will break when the cosmic journey nears its end.

This shattering will also be experienced by man, for he contains the model and image of the entire cosmos. While he lives, his spiritual and physical bodies hold together. All of the functions in his physical body are in equilibrium. However, this amazingly intricate entity falls apart and the body begins to decay when the soul departs.

فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَا يُسْأَلُ عَنْ ذُنُوبِهِ إِنْسٌ وَلَا جَانٌّ ﴿٣٩﴾

39. So on that day neither man nor jinn shall be asked about their wrong actions.

فَيَايَا آلَاءَ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٤٠﴾

40. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

While the previous group of verses spoke of the outer heavens, this group speaks of the inner space of the individual. Every soul will experience what it has earned during the period of life in this world. There will be no questions or doubts because the answers will become fully evident.

In physical existence one can live in hypocrisy. One may hide fears, anxieties and suspicions. The Arabic word for hypocrisy is *nifāq*. It is related to a word which means a tunnel (*nafaq*). Man is forever tunneling, trying to escape. The end to these escapist efforts occurs when questioning ceases and he himself becomes the answer. He will experience and transmit the state in which he left this world. If he has been transformed by the Qur'an, he will be close to the main transmitter, Allah. He will be one of the 'companions of the right hand' (56:38). If, however, he has been exclusively concerned with his ego-self and its cacophony of desires and expectations, his experience and transmission will be endless disturbance.

يَعْرِفُ الْمَجْرُمُونَ بِسِيمَتِهِمْ فَيُؤْخَذُ بِالنَّوَاصِي وَالْأَقْدَامِ ﴿٤١﴾

41. The guilty will be recognized by their marks, so they will be seized by their forelocks and their feet.

فَيَأْتِيَهُمْ الْآلَاءُ رَيْكًا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٤٢﴾

42. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

Everyone is entrapped by their own actions. Those who have not let their hearts spin in free abandonment will not have seen the perfection and justice in this world nor will they have known *tawhīd*, unity. Those who have been deprived of unity and the knowledge of the one source are known by their marks, their scars. Those who have enabled their hearts to be empty,

to remain clear and pure are able to reflect reality and see the truth of every situation. In the next life there is an immediate recognition, because there is no longer duality at play. There is one absolute Reality.

The forelock represents the highest point of a human standing upright and the feet are the lowest part; thus man is caught in his entirety. There is no escape for him, so how can he deny the Truth? He is the outcome of what he has put forth, of where his feet have taken him and to what his forehead has prostrated and inclined in desire and fear.

هَذِهِ جَهَنَّمُ الَّتِي يُكَذِّبُ بِهَا الْمُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

43. This is the Hell which the guilty denied.

يَطُوفُونَ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَ حَمِيمٍ ءَانِ ﴿٤٤﴾

44. They circle around between it and hot, boiling water.

فَيَايَ ءَالِءٍ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٤٥﴾

45. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

The final abode of those who are in denial is the Fire, a bottomless pit (*jahannam*). Everyone in this life has tasted an aspect of the Fire. Adam had never experienced a lie, so when *Shaytān* suggested to him that he taste the fruit of eternity whilst he was still in his original garden, he believed him and thereby experienced the agitation of the fire of desire and disobedience. We have therefore tasted the Fire and the Garden. Had we not experienced these states we could not have any choice or discrimination. Indeed worldly creation could not come about. Everyone knows the meaning of uncertainty, disturbance, agitation, fear, anxiety, hatred and anger. All of

these are fires. Should a man leave these emotions within himself long enough, they will manifest themselves physically and cause imbalances in the body such as stomach ulcers, high blood pressure or other mental or stress illnesses.

In life, man goes round and round without stopping, as if hallucinating. In the Arabic language, certain words sound very similar to others, a phenomenon which evokes a subliminal association in meaning. Hearing one word a person might, quite naturally, recall a similar word, though they have different meanings. The root system of the Arabic language is a vast receptacle of meanings. All the words of a similar sound have the potential to lead one to a single root.

Those who are at a loss in this world will no doubt deny the Beneficent (*al-Rahmān*) in the next world. They are at a loss in both; they but move from the frying-pan into the fire. We often move from one situation to another without real inner progress. A man divorces one wife and enters into an even worse relationship with another. He does not realize it is Allah's love descending upon him, urging him to change his attitude. This life is but a short prelude to the next life.

وَلِمَن خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ جَنَّاتٌ ۖ

46. And for one who fears standing before his Lord
are two gardens.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ۚ

47. Which then of the bounties of your Lord
will you deny?

ذَوَاتَا أَفْنَانٍ ۚ

48. Having in them various kinds.

فَيَايَءَ الْآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٤٩﴾

49. Which then of the bounties of your Lord
will you deny?

For one who recognized lordship, who recognized that there is One Reality in charge, who feared transgressing His laws and was completely in His hands, there are two gardens. One of them is a garden of eternal bliss, the garden of the spirits (*arwāḥ*). The other is the garden of hearts, the garden of eternal witnessing (*mushāhadah*). These are the two 'secret' gardens. There are many other examples of garden pairs: the garden of form and the garden of meaning, the garden of wakefulness and the garden of sleep, the garden of the east (sunrise and day) and the garden of the west (sunset and night), the gardens of the beginning and of the end.

فِيهِمَا عَيْنَانِ تَجْرِيَانِ ﴿٥٠﴾

50. In both of them are two springs flowing.

فَيَايَءَ الْآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٥١﴾

51. Which then of the bounties of your Lord
will you deny?

In the Garden, there are two springs that flow, nourishing in an invisible way, just as man's heart is also nourished invisibly by love and true freedom. People gather together to bury someone who was loved by them, and thus death revives love in living hearts. It becomes a hidden spring, an inner river. Death also reminds people of Allah. It reminds man of the physical end so that he becomes less conceited, mean, arrogant and hard-hearted.

فِيهِمَا مِنْ كُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ زَوْجَانِ ﴿٥٢﴾

52. In both of them are pairs of every fruit.

فَيَايَءَ الْآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٥٣﴾

53. Which then of the bounties of your Lord
will you deny?

مُتَّكِئِينَ عَلَى فُرُشٍ بَطَآئِنُهَا مِنْ إِسْتَبْرَقٍ وَجَنَى الْجَنَّتَيْنِ دَانٍ ﴿٥٤﴾

54. Reclining on beds, with inner coverings of silk
brocade, the fruits of both gardens within reach.

فَيَايَءَ الْآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٥٥﴾

55. Which then of the bounties of your Lord
will you deny?

How can one deny the bounties of Allah? In the gardens there are fruits of every kind and description. There are two different flowing rivers of bounty and two complementary types of beings: man and woman.

Reclining on beds of silk brocade implies that all that could be imagined in the way of comfort, luxury and relaxation is available. It implies being in a state of great tranquility with one's heart at rest. This is, of course, never possible in this life, because as soon as one becomes tranquil and secure, some change or disturbance occurs that must be dealt with; agitation in this life is never-ending.

فِيهِنَّ قَاصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ لَمْ يَطْمِثْهُنَّ إِنْسٌ قَبْلَهُمْ وَلَا جَانٌّ ﴿٥٦﴾

56. Therein are those of restraint whom neither man
nor jinn have touched before.

فَيَايَءَ الْآءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٥٧﴾

57. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

كَأَنَّهُنَّ الْيَاقُوتُ وَالْمَرْجَانُ ﴿٥٨﴾

58. As though they were rubies and coral.

فَيَايَءَ الْآءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٥٩﴾

59. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

Access to the inner gardens are for those who restrain themselves, who lower their gaze modestly. The females of the Garden are the perfect match to bring about the ultimate contentment. They have never been touched and are forever pure. Their 'perpetual' virginity elevates man's imagination from the physical vulgarity to which he is accustomed in this earthly world. This implies a higher state of purity, one based on a timeless equilibrium; the instant desire arises, it is assuaged.

There is never permanent satisfaction in any relationship in this life, save only the relationship between the bondsman and his Lord. In every other relationship there is blame. A man blames his wife, and she blames him. Nobody blames himself; and so it never ceases. Man expects most from others while not expecting submission and abandonment from himself. A person who can live with himself, can live with anyone else.

Rubies and coral scintillate in their purity. The ultimate beauty of nature is pure and simple, without interference or compromise. In the Garden, women have not had to beautify themselves; they are beauty itself; naturally real and pure; the essence of beauty — timeless.

هَلْ جَزَاءُ الْإِحْسَنِ إِلَّا الْإِحْسَنُ ﴿٦٠﴾

60. Is the reward of goodness but goodness?

فَيَايَءَ الْآءِ رَبِّكَ مَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٦١﴾

61. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

Is not the reward of good action good recompense? Every action has its equal and opposite reaction. When one has done good it will come back. But is the goodness done for Allah or is it for one's own whims and fancy? Many people think they are acting correctly while in reality they are in a muddle and at a loss. There is a tradition which says: 'The sleep of one who knows (i.e. the awakened soul) is better than the wakefulness of the unknowing worshipper.' Wakefulness is measured by the degree of knowledge and recognition of Him who is worshipped: Allah.

Many people strive for right action, establish charities and carry out acts of generosity and so on. If they expect those whom they help to fall at their feet in gratitude, it means that these so-called generous people are not serving for Allah's sake. The verse, 'Is the reward of goodness aught but goodness?', is often misunderstood. If one's action is honorable, it will only have a like reaction. Is the good action (*ihsān*) in the way of Him Who created man? The service that man renders for the Beneficent (*al-Rahmān*) should be the best. How else can he repay Him? How can he repay the mercy of Allah other than by reflecting His perfect Attributes? The faithfulness of the slave of his Lord is exemplified by all the prophets in their actions, and the best we can do is to follow in the dust of their footsteps.

وَمِنْ دُونِهِمَا جَنَّتَانِ ﴿٦٢﴾

62. And besides these are two other gardens.

فَيَأْتِيءَ الْآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٦٣﴾

63. Which then of the bounties of your Lord
will you deny?

مُدَّهَامَتَانِ ﴿٦٤﴾

64. Both inclining to darkness.

فَيَأْتِيءَ الْآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٦٥﴾

65. Which then of the bounties of your Lord
will you deny?

فِيهِمَا عَيْنَانِ نَضَّاخَتَانِ ﴿٦٦﴾

66. Wherein are two springs gushing forth.

فَيَأْتِيءَ الْآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٦٧﴾

67. Which then of the bounties of your Lord
will you deny?

فِيهِمَا فَتْكُهُ وَنَخْلٌ وَرُمَّانٌ ﴿٦٨﴾

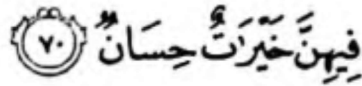
68. In both the fruits and palms and pomegranates.

فَيَأْتِيءَ الْآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٦٩﴾

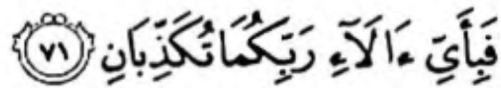
69. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you
deny?

Besides the two gardens previously referred to there are two others: the gardens of those who fear to stand before Allah in the next life. 'Both inclining to blackness': the word used for this short phrase means that which is of a dark green color inclining to black from being much watered. Still these gardens are not of the pure light which is the essence of everything.

In both of these gardens are also two springs. Within every event one finds two situations. Within each duality there is yet another duality, in the sensory and in the meaning. The unfolding of duality within duality is unending. When one reflects upon this world and its affairs, one will find that there is no end to reflection; it is a bottomless sea encompassed by the boundless shores of Reality.



70. In them are what is good and beautiful.



71. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

Within these gardens are only what is good and beautiful. In this world there cannot be good without bad existing alongside it. Every good action that man wants to initiate is surrounded by the possibilities of wrong action. One must wade in and cut through the jungle of wrong action to reach what is in the center. The way of wrong action is easy, for it is diverse; but the way of right action is difficult, for it is precise. Virtue is surrounded by vices in all directions.

Always within the beauty of this world lies its opposite, ugliness. As beautiful as anything may be, think of it when it is decaying. Think of a pond of beautiful water lilies; then think of them in winter and how they die and rot. Think of a beautiful woman; then think of her when she is old, decrepit

and on her deathbed. Beauty in this realm always contains ugliness, whereas in the next realm there is only pure beauty.

حُورٌ مَّقْصُورَاتٌ فِي الْخِيَامِ ﴿٧٢﴾

72. Pure ones confined to pavilions.

فَيَأْتِيَهُنَّ الْآيَةُ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٧٣﴾

73. Which then of the bounties of your Lord
will you deny?

Hūr or virgins of paradise, are in the highest state of perpetual purity, which is what is most desired. The pure ones are confined to pavilions, the abode of fulfillment and contentment. The pavilions referred to are the enclosures of final homecoming.

لَمْ يَطْمِئِنَّهُنَّ إِنْسٌ قَبْلَهُمْ وَلَا جَانٌّ ﴿٧٤﴾

74. Neither man nor jinn has touched them before.

فَيَأْتِيَهُنَّ الْآيَةُ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٧٥﴾

75. Which then of the bounties of your Lord
will you deny?

These entities are pure and unpolluted and not tarnished in any manner. Coming into the next life, men become neutralized by these 'power' entities.

مُتَّكِئِينَ عَلَى رَفْرَفٍ خُضِرٍ وَعَبَقَرٍ حَسَانٍ ﴿٧٦﴾

76. Reclining on green cushions and beautiful carpets.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٧٧﴾

78. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?

The word for colorful carpet also mean a genius. 'Abqar also is a legendary place inhabited by the *jinn*. It signifies certain comforts and joys attained by the people of the Garden. No longer confined by their bodies, they are of another nature and reality.

بُورِكَ اسْمُ رَبِّكَ ذِي الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ ﴿٧٨﴾

79. Blessed is the name of your Lord, the Majestic, Mighty and Glorious.

This chapter begins with the Name of the One whose Beneficence encompasses all, the One Who taught the knowledge of Himself based on discrimination and balance, the Qur'an. Allah's first manifestation was His light, the light of knowledge. The chapter ends with: Blessed be the name of your Lord. If man calls upon Allah, He will approach his original and final abode.

Man is on a journey in this life. He has in his hand a passport which reads 'Allah'. Allah is the destination and the port but one must pass through the barrier of the ego-self (*nafs*). If man travels through that port then he is on his way to his Lord. When he reaches the essence of the Name, it is one with Reality. While journeying, the traveler might say what his destination is, but the passport is not the same thing as arrival. The experience of arrival does not begin until he is actually there. You do not experience wakefulness unless you have left the experience of sleep behind.

Man is only as good as his intention. Stopping time, compressing it together rather than telescoping it, brings the Name and its reality together. If one's heart is completely with

Allah, the Name will be the key to the door. When the door opens, one will discover that the Lord has always been there. He has unbounded love for His creation. His creation contains every meaning, all of which are encompassed within the primal blueprint innate in humankind.

In this impossible situation of the world man strives to be glorified and honored but finds it futile because honor and glory belong only to Allah. If man honors and glorifies Him, he may eventually see only Him. Then the options of others, whether good or bad, mean little. People admire him, and he does not mind. People curse him, and he does not mind; because, having put himself in the lowest possible position in ego-self hierarchy, his mind is focused only on Allah. Allah's reward for this submission and behavior is the opposite: He bestows upon him real honor, that is, the knowledge of His Divine Essence.

The key to knowledge of all-encompassing Beneficent is the recognition of His infinite mercy and love. Whichever way man turns there is only blessedness. If his experience is sweet, it is blessedness; if it is bitter, it is another type of blessedness. How can there possibly be peace without war? Or health without illness? How can there be Islam, submission to Reality, unless there is a boundary beyond which are its enemies? There is the House of Islam (*Dar al-Islam*) and the house of denial (*dār al-kufr*). One state cannot exist without the other. How can life be treasured and valued unless there is the experience of its opposite, death? How can there be the experience of wakefulness without sleep? Both opposites of every experiential state are glorious and a blessing from Allah.

The knowledge of the self (*nafs*), once it is experienced, is one of the highest gifts because it is the knowledge of the Lord. If man is faithful, if he trusts, he will continuously see the mercy (*rahmah*) of the Beneficent (*al-Rahmān*) in every aspect of existence. This is the positive contentment of the Muslim. He possesses discrimination, the ability to discern a

healthy atmosphere from an unhealthy one, but within either situation he recognizes the blessing of Allah. His contented heart guides him to correct action (*ihsān*), to the station of excellence (*maqām al-ihsān*), acting as though Allah sees him even though he cannot see Allah.

Man must aspire to purer action until he is, as an individual, doing his utmost according to his total ability. Then he shall have attained the station of excellence. He is in the right place at the right time, doing the right thing. This is the highest reward of the good state (*maqām al-ihsān*) for good action (*ihsān*).

If one can do something better than one is doing, one should do it. Once that point of total commitment has been reached, a person will be able to burst out of his self-imposed and imaginary constraints. Then he will not be where he does not belong nor will he be where he does not get the maximum real benefit and fulfillment.

The highest reward is the recognition of the honor and the glory of the Lord upon Whom man is forever dependent. If he is a dedicated and pure servant, the robe of His glory and His honor will also be placed upon him. A true servant is so finely tuned to his Master that he almost reflects the Master's authority and knowledge. If the Lord's bondsman is truly loyal and committed, he will then reflect the majesty and the glory of the most Gracious.